

debt crisis. I have been talking about it for a while, and I won't stop talking about it because it is a crisis my Democratic colleagues still don't seem to understand.

Right now, our Nation is headed toward \$30 trillion in debt. Think about that—\$30 trillion. The U.S. debt will be equal to \$240,000 per taxpayer. That is insane. And what are the Democrats doing to rein in this unsustainable debt? Absolutely nothing.

In fact, the Democrats' wasteful and untargeted spending bill, which will raise the debt from \$28 trillion to \$30 trillion contains loads of handouts and provisions, just like this one, that recklessly spend on their priorities unrelated to COVID.

That is why I sent a letter to the Biden administration on Monday, urging him to rescind hundreds of billions in waste from this bill and create a targeted approach Americans truly need.

It is clear that Democrats are living in a fantasy land where debt doesn't matter, spending has no consequences, and inflation is impossible. Of course, reasonable Americans know that is not true.

The Biden administration needs to take immediate action to request the rescission of the non-COVID-related, liberal agenda-driven, and wasteful funding found throughout this bill.

So I will keep fighting to cut down on this liberal wish list. Today, we can start that important work and pass my bill to not only save \$2 billion from going to inmates who have no need for the money, but also show the American people that Congress is committed to remaining fully accountable to the American people for the proper stewardship of tax dollars.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 798, introduced earlier today. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, today the Republicans are showing some real chutzpa.

On this issue, Republicans were for it before they were against it. Today, they claim to want to target prisoners. The real harm they are doing is to innocent children and families.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The junior Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, it is hard to imagine that my colleague just rose in opposition to this good bill.

Let's be clear. By objecting to this bill, Democrats are standing in full support of spending \$2 billion to send

\$1,400 checks to inmates. Democrats want to spend \$2 billion in taxpayer money to send checks to people in prison, convicted of committing serious crimes and victimizing their fellow Americans.

That means Democrats are saying that they want American taxpayers to be on the hook for \$1,400 checks to some of the most heinous criminals we have ever seen—people like Dylann Roof and the Parkland shooter.

How can anyone justify sending checks to these people? Let's remember, inmates don't pay income taxes. They have all their needs, food and medical expenses included, paid for by taxpayers. They don't do anything to stimulate our economy.

I do hope my colleague will reconsider his objection and stand with me in putting accountability to American taxpayers over this insane policy that does nothing but throw \$2 billion we don't have out the window.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I wish you and I wish everyone a happy St. Patrick's Day. It is a big day for celebration up in Boston and all of Massachusetts and all across the country and the world. On St. Patrick's Day, everyone is Irish. So I wish everyone a happy St. Patrick's Day today.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Madam President, right now on the floor of the U.S. Senate is a reason not to be so happy, and that is why I look forward to very soon casting my vote to confirm Xavier Becerra to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, one of the most qualified and forward-thinking minds that will have ever run the Department of Health and Human Services.

But today, Republicans are using this confirmation vote to continue their agenda of obstruction, deflecting attention away from the nominee who will be the head of the chief Federal Agency responding to the coronavirus crisis—all to revive an unnecessary, blatantly political debate on reproductive rights. This ridiculous delay tactic only highlights how out of step with the American people the Senate Republicans are.

Their anti-choice, anti-woman, and anti-health rhetoric is on full display here on the Senate floor, and, sadly, it is not new. They want to roll back Roe v. Wade. They want to criminalize abortion care. They want the government to control women and their bodies. They want to roll back title IX protections for women on university

campuses and completely gut the title X program to fund critical healthcare providers like Planned Parenthood.

Republicans have put in place an anti-choice majority on the U.S. Supreme Court by confirming Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh and illegitimately filling Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's seat with Amy Coney Barrett. If there ever were a reason to abolish the filibuster, it is to ensure that we pass legislation to expand the Supreme Court so it cannot overturn Roe v. Wade and set us back decades in the fight for equal access to healthcare in our country.

But here today, the Republicans are attempting to disrupt the nomination of our Secretary of Health and Human Services with a craven political play to their base at the expense of the health of Americans. They would rather play politics than confirm President Biden's Cabinet nominees. They would rather remain beholden to the far-right's interest groups than do the work the American people sent us here to do.

For the past 4 years, the Trump administration emboldened these groups with dangerous rhetoric and far-right policies. But in November, how did the American people respond? They voted him out and gave the Democrats the Senate majority. Americans entrusted us to serve them, not fringe interest groups who want to turn back the clocks on healthcare and women's rights. That is why I stand on the floor of the U.S. Senate today to say abortion is healthcare.

We cannot stand for any more disparities, delays, or denials. More than ever in this country, we need to stand up and raise our voices against the Republican's work to restrict access to reproductive health services. We have a fight ahead of us—a fight to protect reproductive freedom, a fight to make sure that birth control is affordable and available, and a fight for title X to ensure that low-income patients receive quality family planning and reproductive health services.

Voters expect the Biden-Harris administration to take bold steps to protect and expand access to reproductive healthcare and freedoms, to ensure that every person has the fundamental right to make their own healthcare decisions, and they expect it because they want it.

Public support for Roe v. Wade is at a record high. Seventy-seven percent of Americans support that historic Supreme Court decision. That goes beyond a simple majority to an overwhelming consensus. A couple of years ago, one analysis of polling found that there is not a single State in the United States where a majority of voters support "making abortion illegal in all circumstances." The American people have moved past that debate that Republicans seem committed to resuscitating on the floor today. They are on the wrong side of history and the wrong side of the American people.

So as Republicans try to hijack this confirmation vote on Xavier Becerra,

all I can say is, enough. Enough with the era of extreme bodily discrimination. Enough with outside entities taking control over what a woman can and cannot do with her body. Enough with mounting barriers to reproductive services and birth control. Enough with criminalization of abortion care. Enough with creating roadblocks for poor women, immigrant women, and women of color to get equal access to healthcare. Enough with this offensive debate steeped in misogyny, partisanship, and tyranny.

It is time to guarantee quality, affordable healthcare regardless of race, status, or gender. It is time to rectify the healthcare and reproductive injustices that have cost too many lives for too long. We must move away from the antiquated and ideological debate over women's bodies and recognize the spaces in which our government can promote equity. We can reshape policy to reflect the constitutional rights of all people.

By delaying Xavier Becerra's nomination to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, Republicans seem more interested in denying the health rights of half of Americans than in protecting the health of all Americans.

Plain and simple, Xavier Becerra is exceedingly qualified to be our next Health and Human Services Secretary. He has proven that he prioritizes science and facts, believes in each person's right to make health and medical decisions about their own bodies, and is dedicated to fighting for those most vulnerable in our society. His record and support for reproductive freedom reflect the will of the vast majority of Americans who support legal access to abortion. He is committed to reproductive freedom and understands the importance of ensuring people have access to the accurate information they need to make the best decisions for their lives and for their families.

Xavier Becerra knows what is at stake, and I have the utmost confidence that he will lead with conviction, with compassion, and with care, and is ready to undo the damage that has been done by his predecessors.

As America continues to battle the coronavirus pandemic, his confirmation is long overdue. I am proud to support Xavier Becerra today as Secretary of Health and Human Services. He will be one of the greatest Secretaries our country has ever known.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New Jersey.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I come to the floor today to discuss yesterday's report from the Intelligence Committee, a public report, which confirmed what we all suspected last year: that the Russian Federation favored Donald Trump's reelection and sought to influence the outcome by amplifying attacks on Joe Biden and his family. While the scale of interference appears to be less than what we saw in 2016, the

receptiveness of Trump's inner circle appears to have been about the same. They were open for business.

I am not here to relitigate the 2016 or 2020 elections; I am here to raise my concern with the fact that, for two election cycles in a row now, the Republican Party's nominee for President sought to normalize foreign interference in our elections. And I want to be clear. It is wrong, it is hostile, it is undemocratic, and it must stop if you want the American people to have the confidence in the legitimacy and the credibility of our elections going forward.

This is not about party; this is about the durability of our democracy. Everyone in this body has an important role to play in rejecting foreign interference and restoring trust in our election process.

While the contents of the report came as no surprise, its findings were nonetheless breathtaking. Our intelligence community is highly confident—the highest assessment they have on any given issue—in its assessment that Vladimir Putin was involved in the operation whereby Andrii Derkach and Konstantin Kilimnik successfully manipulated President Trump's inner circle, including his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani.

Thankfully, the American people had better sense than Mr. Giuliani and rejected the Kremlin-backed lies about Joe Biden and his family. That, however, does not diminish the fact that the Russian Government undertook this effort and the former President welcomed it. The Russian interference detailed in this report occurred at the very same time the Trump administration sought to publicly downplay the role played by Russia.

This report was mandated by Congress and for good reason. Americans deserve to know exactly who is interfering in our democracy and how. As I said before, everyone has a role to play, including the American people. We have to encourage Americans to practice better cyber security and to scrutinize the information they see on the web. Carefully examining social media posts before sharing them must become the new hallmark of a patriotic, active, and informed citizenry. And our social media companies must do a better job stopping the proliferation of foreign disinformation on their platforms.

The health of our democracy depends on this vigilance. The Kremlin will continue to attack our elections and seek to sow divisions among us. We have a responsibility to resist this interference and not make their job any easier.

We live in a media environment where Donald Trump and his Republican allies continue to this day to promote unhinged conspiracy theories that the election was stolen. The intelligence report confirms this is not true.

Some Republican officials have promoted wild conspiracy theories that China supported Democratic cam-

paigns. The intelligence report confirms this was not true.

Former President Trump and his allies still assert that Venezuela manipulated voting machines. A companion report by the Department of Justice and Homeland Security confirmed this is not true.

We must come to terms with the fact that while Russia has aggressively promoted disinformation in our country, the most pernicious engine of lies in the United States is cast by the former President himself.

Knowing the facts sets a foundation for action, and I look forward to engaging with this administration on measures to respond to our intelligence community's findings. There should be sanctions required in response to this interference, and the administration should move quickly to impose them.

I welcome the approach thus far by the Biden administration as it crafts a Russia policy that calls out Kremlin aggression when it happens and takes strong measures in response. The sanctions imposed in response to the Navalny assassination attempt demonstrate that such reckless and dangerous behavior will not be tolerated. And our efforts to hold the Kremlin accountable will include close coordination with our European allies.

The package of sanctions announced on March 2 shows how committed the Biden administration is to confronting Kremlin aggression. This type of rigor in the development of sanctions packages is a welcome reminder of how our government should work. The Navalny sanctions were a good first step, and I look forward to soon seeing the results of the administration's review of Russia policy. In my view, we need a strategy that accomplishes four main goals.

One, limiting the Kremlin's ability to interfere in our democracy as well as those of our allies and partners. This includes a comprehensive plan to counter Russian-generated propaganda and corruption around the world.

Two, standing up for our friends in Ukraine who are literally on the frontlines battling Kremlin aggression. They need our diplomatic support in Europe. They need our security assistance to defend themselves. They need our encouragement to reform democratic institutions. I hope that President Biden will soon speak with President Zelensky to send these important messages.

Three, we have a responsibility to engage with the Russian Government when it is in our national security interests. I supported the extension of the New START agreement and urge the administration to continue to advance arms control policies that advance stability and our national security.

Finally, our Russia policy must extend a hand to the Russian people, many of whom have courageously turned out by the thousands in opposition to Putin and his government. Their struggle for democracy is theirs,